

# Influencers of Urban Climate Change Policy: Long Beach

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## Introduction & Background

Climate change has become a widespread issue, affecting communities across the globe. As humans navigate the effects of climate change, its impacts will be increasingly felt by urban communities. The role of urban communities within the climate policy sphere is becoming increasingly vital, thus the importance to implement policy that supports the path towards urban sustainability. This project examines the discourse around creating and implementing climate change policy at the city level. The project highlights who the key players are in Long Beach's climate change policy and their main views, goals, and proposed approaches.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has distributed resources to promote policy and public programs to address the concerning effects of climate change in urban areas (EPA, 2015). To combat these anticipated effects, the EPA has introduced strategies to manage environmental aspects such as air quality, water, waste management, and extreme weather events. Among these recommendations is the need for emergency response to extreme heat events, as some areas, such as Long Beach, will be susceptible to cases of extreme heat, which is predicted to have effects on human health and well-being (EPA, 2015). These recommendations will provide a baseline framework through which urban communities may structure their plans to combat the climate crisis and create community resilience.

Long Beach has been working to create and adopt the most recent version of their Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, or CAAP, which is said to be accepted by 2021. The Long Beach CAAP is the outline in which the city plans to create a more sustainable Long Beach, and the policies that will get them there. In an analysis of environmental policy in Los Angeles done in 1996, the connection to policy and the needs of business for lax environmental policies were shown. Environmental, community, and neighborhood groups opposed these lax policies, but proved unsuccessful (Keil, et al, 1996.) Keil mentions the ability of industry to roll back previous legislation on air quality that worked to protect community members in order to benefit industries. Using this analysis as a comparison will help determine if urban climate policy has changed, giving more or less power to industry or community groups.



Figure 1. Aerial shot of Long Beach, California. Source: Istock Photos Website

## Methods

The first step for this project was to gather newspaper articles from The Long Beach Post, The Grunion Gazette, and The Long Beach Tribune that pertain to the city's climate policies. The second step was to analyze the data from the articles using a qualitative data program. The qualitative research method being used is called Discourse Network Analysis or DNA. The DNA software organizes and illustrates major players, their contributions to Long Beach's climate policies, and their connections to relevant concepts and players (Leifeld, 2018).

The DNA program requires coding of the articles for specific terms, individuals, or organizations that have participated in the conversation of Long Beach's climate policies. The program helped to make connections between concepts and those who support or oppose these concepts. Once these steps were complete, the final step was to load the information from the DNA program into another program, called Visone, that created visible graphs of the players to concepts connections.

## Results

The results showed that the most active players in the topic of Long Beach climate policy are the city (elected officials and staff), The Port of Long Beach, Southern California Edison, and The State of California (elected officials and state agency staff members.) Other less mentioned players include community groups, non-profits, and scientists that have commented on the topic of climate change as it pertains to the Long Beach area.

Breathe LA
California Natural Resources Agency
City of Long Beach
Climatologist & Oceanographer
League of Women Voters- LB
Port of Long Beach
So Cal Edison
State Air Resources
State of California
USC

Figure 2: This is a list of all the players identified in the newspaper articles. Those included in "The City of Long Beach" and "The State of California" include both staff members and elected officials.

To better understand the information, a set of concepts were created to organize the statements given by these players. These concepts are essentially a short, condensed version of interests, motives, concerns, and thoughts expressed by the players. The concepts work as categories; when different players share similar sentiments in how they approach or feel about climate policy, connections can be made between the players.

Concepts	Agreements from Players
Achieve Zero Emissions	2
Reducing Greenhouse Gases	1
Transition to Renewable / Clean Energy	2
Main Motivation is to mitigate impacts on industry	2
Concerned with Sea Level Rise	3
Tech/Infrastructure to mitigate climate change effects	1
Main Motivation is to promote environmental justice	4
Investment in Community resilience and public programs	3
Urban Heat Islands	3
Climate Change Education	2
Climate Change Mitigation is Expensive- requires additional funding	1
Fees are successful as mitigation strategy	1
Industry as largest polluter	1
Creation of Green Jobs	1

Figure 3: The table shows the list of concepts used to code the statements (about climate policy) made by players. The table shows how many times each concept was agreed with by the various players. This helped to determine the most voiced concerns, priorities, and sentiment shared by the players.

Once the data from DNA program was downloaded into Visone, a clear picture of connections were created. It became clear that the players most concerned with climate policy as it pertains to industry were the Port of Long Beach and Southern California Edison. The data connections also show the City of Long Beach is heavily concerned with climate change effects of communities, investing in community resilience, and overall health and well being of the community. All players agree that urban sustainability and climate change mitigation is important; the main difference being the motivation for mitigation and policy.

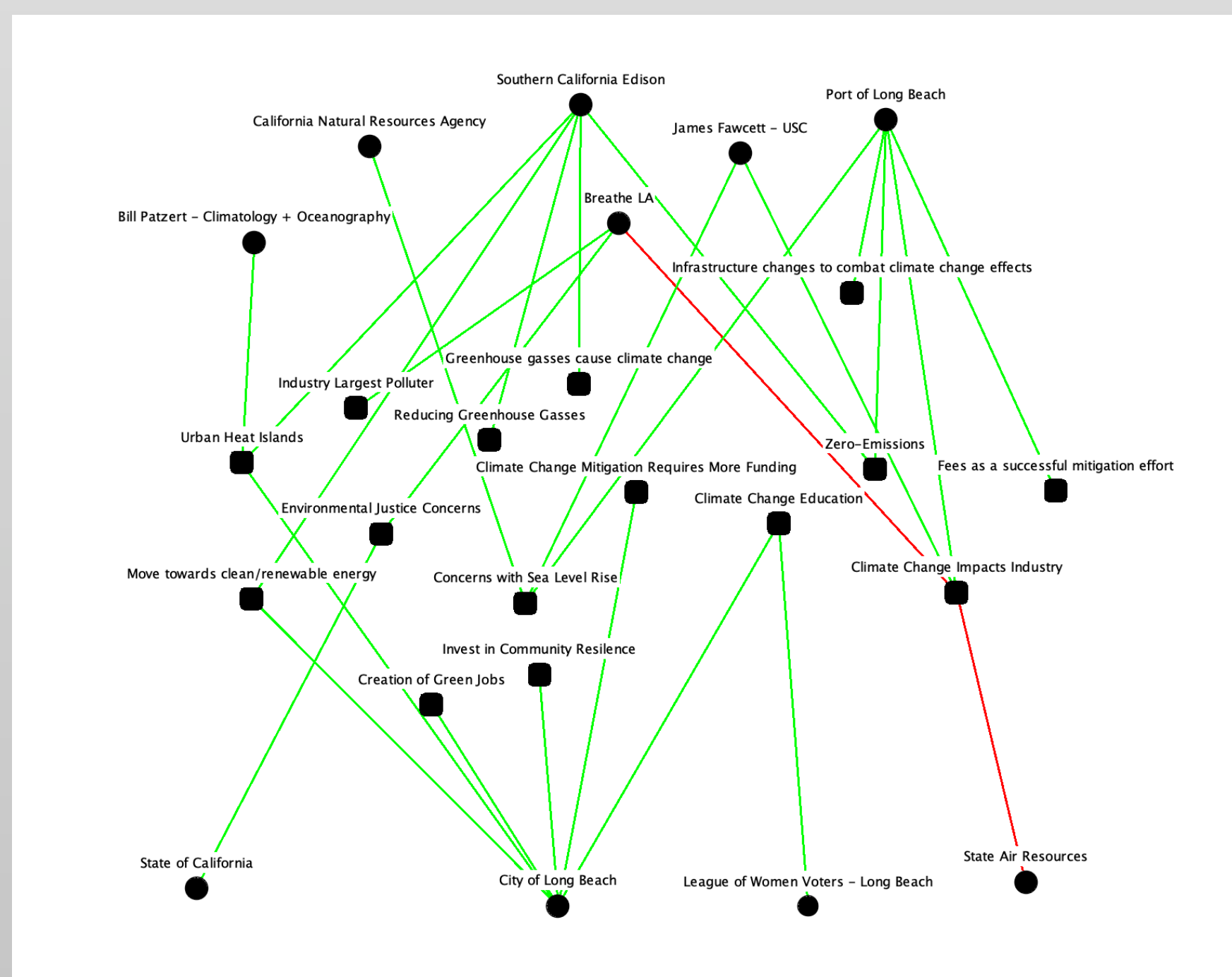


Figure 4: The graphic is the output of the DNA coded data using Visone. The graphic shows the concepts (squares), the players (dots), as well as their agreements (green lines) and disagreements (red lines.)

## Discussion

The results from this study show the most significant and vocal players in the discussion around urban climate policy in Long Beach. From the results, it becomes clear that The City of Long Beach, the Port of Long Beach, and Southern California Edison are the most prominent entities discussing climate policy in local newspapers. When we consider the previously mentioned analysis of environmental policies done by Keil in 1996, we can see how much climate policy has changed at the city level in Los Angeles County. Keil highlighted how much policy reflected the best interest of industry in 1996, and while community and environmental groups tried to advocate for the environmental health of communities, they were largely unsuccessful in turning their efforts into policy.

As seen in the results, Breathe LA and State Air Resources, and the City, have concerns for constituents before industry. Specifically, Breathe LA prioritizes the needs of those who disproportionately experience the effects of climate change, and have argued that many of the tactics used by local industry are not enough to truly combat the issues. In the CAAP working to be passed in Long Beach, we see that the concerns of these community and non-profit groups being included in the legislation of Long Beach. This is starkly different than the analysis from 1996. Concern for community members health and well-being is being considered and included into the policies working to be passed within the city.

Unlike the policy creation observed in 1996, major industry players in Long Beach such as the port and So Cal Edison, acknowledge the detrimental effects of climate change on community members and the importance of policy in order to mitigate those effects. While many of their statements do circle around the wellbeing of industry, it seems that the policies being created in the Long Beach CAAP do put clear limits, timelines, and regulations for industry not meeting these new standards. Long Beach has set a goal to reach 100% renewable/clean energy, which includes industry.

While these results are significant, it is important to note the potential shortcomings of this research. In media, organizations like to put their best foot forward, and tend to be positive about the future and their efforts to mitigate an issue such as climate change. This research looks solely at media discourse, and does not look into tangible actions taken by the entities, organizations, or individuals mentioned.

## Conclusions/Policy Recommendations

This research showed who the prominent players are in the discourse on climate change policy in Long Beach. The research also highlights the concerns, priorities, and approaches to combating climate change these players discuss.

After conducting this research, and examining the Long Beach Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, or LBCAAP, closely, it shows that many of the addressed policy priorities and concerns mentioned by these players have been addressed (LBCAAP 2020.) Mentioned in the LBCAAP are the plans and policies moving Long Beach toward renewable energy, reduction of greenhouse gases, the creation of green jobs, and the investment into public programs. The LB CAAP also mentions the plan to address the rise of sea level and urban heat islands in Long Beach.

While the Long Beach CAAP does talk about how to make these policies and sustainability efforts equitable, there could more focus or discussion on the particulars of addressing environmental justice issues. There are three dedicated pages to health equity in the CAAP but no specific policies or plans to address the inequity and disproportionate effects of climate change on certain communities in Long Beach.

## For more information

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